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Book Review

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BOOK REVIEW

Evaluation and Educational Programming of Students with Deafblindness and Severe Disabilities: Sensorimotor Stage, 2nd Ed.
(Charles C. Thomas Publisher, LTD.)

By Carroll J. Jones

Over the past fifteen years, there have been significant advances in understanding the population of students identified as deafblind and the supports needed to provide an appropriate education. The primary areas of advancement appear in both information about the incidence and nature of deafblindness and the use of specialized educational strategies and protocols within general education programs and settings. Currently, it is recognized that students with deafblindness are an extremely heterogeneous group and that a large number of these students present additional cognitive, motor and other disabilities that further influence development of optimal educational programs. This book offers a traditional examination of the correlates to human development that are significantly impacted within those students who are deafblind that are identified with cognitive and motor impairments. It focuses on students who, when compared to a typically developing child, are functioning within the first 12 months of life across each domain of Piaget's Sensorimotor Stage. It should be noted that this text may assume the reader has an understanding of the factors that influence this stage of human development as well as an understanding of its implications in the development of representational behavior.

The second edition of this book maintains a simple and useable reference format that includes an introduction and then chapters on vision, hearing, tactile-kinesthetic-vestibular development, motor development and programming, cognition, communication and social/emotional development. Within each of these chapters, the author has presented the reader with a comprehensive overview of the nature and assessment of each of the human development domains. The author discusses the intricacies of each domain and their relationship to each other in the role of human development and learning. In addition, each chapter infuses information that may assist in the development and implementation of educational programs and services. However, it must be noted that there are generalizations about sensory impairment that may be seriously debated. For example, the statement "Children with deafness tend to be egocentric and experience more emotional problems than children with normal hearing" (p. 118). The general performance characteristics that are presented on page 9, further reinforce generalizations about a segment of students who are deafblind that may not be defined well enough or with sufficient scope to be accurate or useable. This list of characteristics also provide in impression that these students to not present any opportunity to gain independence.

The book provides several case studies that are used to illustrate assessment/educational program protocols. At the end of each chapter, tables that represent assessment forms and other relative information regarding the associated domain are offered as a resource and guideline.

There is a summary of each chapter that addresses its content and attempts to synthesize the detailed clinical information for the reader.

A noted addition to this second edition is the introduction and focus on “Snoezelen” which is an artificially created multi-sensory stimulating environment for individuals with severe sensory impairment, autism, and multiple disabilities. Snoezelen is a blending of two Dutch words meaning to “sniff” and to “doze”. Snoezelen rooms are created to promote learning, play, relaxation and provide sensory stimulation activities. It is a clinically based approach to providing sensory stimulation with a growing popularity in educational and residential facilities for children and adults with severe disabilities. There are concerns however, that this approach continues to perpetuate a medical and clinical model of educational programs and settings for students with severe disabilities including deafblindness.

Although the text provides an array of information that can be useful, it does not easily lead the reader to applications within normalized educational programs. In addition, there are glaring referenced generalizations regarding cognitive impairment that may evoke the impression that these students can be viewed as homogeneous group. The text serves well as a clinically oriented approach to understanding the elements of human development and its effect on deafblind individuals with additional cognitive and motor disabilities. However, in isolation and in the absence of appropriate guidance, this book could perpetuate the inappropriate practices of deficit oriented education. And segregated therapeutic educational environments for the students it is intended to assist. This book would be best as a supplementary text within a course in which the instructor can provide the understandings necessary to use the developmental information within a functional context and within natural educational environments.

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